My Teaching Philosophy: A Student-Centered Education

Purpose of Education:
My philosophy on education follows that of several great philosophers who have gone before us. I believe a student-centered education not only teaches a child but grows them. We must concern ourselves as educators to the well-being of the whole child. We can provide students with specific and purposeful education. Such instruction meets the individual needs of every student, in hopes of growing students into well-versed citizens. It has the potential to give every student the opportunity and the tools they need to change their environment and the world around them. As educators, we can equip our students in this way by encouraging our students to participate in community service projects such as picking up litter, recycling, and volunteering in other meaningful projects. Inviting a variety of guests into the classroom can also help students see the diverse roles each person plays in our society.

Goals for Student Learning:
I believe my role as a teacher is to facilitate learning; however, it goes much deeper than mere facilitation. I hope to offer my students a learning environment where they can develop and grow as a community of learners. My goal is to foster the ability within my students to think creatively, to improve literacy skills, and to instill in them a lifelong love of learning. I hope to model and communicate that learning is fun. Playing games, integrating art into lesson plans, and incorporating brain-breaks that get students moving are all components of a fun and interactive classroom. I believe these components also empower students by helping them build up their self-esteem and their confidence, so they can develop the capacity to think for themselves and make wise decisions.

Teaching Methods:
I believe in training individual students and helping each of my students to achieve their potential. Using a variety of teaching styles and a varied and specialized number of activities will allow me to reach each student in my classroom. I hope to provide my students with many opportunities to explore by using stations, small group debating, and custom-made activities using real experience to gain knowledge and skill. These methods allow students to answer questions in a small group, ensuring that each student can participate in the discussion, and task at hand. I also believe it is essential, based on my observations of current society, to integrate technology into the classroom. The use of technology can motivate students and enhance the level of student engagement; it relates what we are teaching in the classroom to real life. Connecting education to real-life gives purpose to what we are doing and why we are doing it. The use of technology in the classroom allows for differentiated instruction, ensuring each student is learning in their preferred way, and at their level and interest. Using restorative practices also helps to create a learning community that encourages authentic conversations, discussions of both curricular and non-curricular topics, and an overall sense of the class as a family. Building strong relationships with students, based on mutual respect, contributes to a positive classroom environment where mistakes can be made and learned from ensuring that real learning can take place.

Assessment of Goals:
I believe in student autonomy. We live, and we learn. We have opportunities for self-assessment as we grow, adjust, and do better, striving to be the best we can be. I believe this form of assessment encourages students to critique their work as they reflectively make improvements. Using formative assessment, including observations during the use of various teaching strategies such as think-pair-share, and strategic questioning along with creative extension projects all contribute to student demonstration of comprehension. Such assessment can potentially help students to apply the higher-order levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. One well-planned project offering a plethora of choice, award students the opportunity to demonstrate learning. It also provides the opportunity for mastery which, is evidence of achieved objectives. I believe essays, short stories, and poetry are effective summative assessments that add interest and engagement to the end of a lesson. Project-based assessment, instead of testing, allows students to creatively demonstrate deeper learning. By teaching students to delve into the subject matter as opposed to the memorization of facts and dates, students have the opportunity to learn and grow through the experiences of others. I believe, as educators, by using experience and project-based learning, we are growing students to be forever learners, who have a learning-for-the-sake-of-learning mentality. It is my hope the pride they will take in their project will stimulate a desire to work outside the classroom on "schoolwork."

Classroom Environment:
My philosophy on social justice follows that of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Paulo Freire, and Jesus Christ. Everyone is a person. Everyone is important. Everyone can achieve when given the opportunity. Every student has tremendous worth and can effect change. I believe using restorative circles will foster a culture of inclusion and aid in the development of mutual respect within the classroom. In my classroom, I hope to inspire my students to see the world in a positive light. To give them the gift of education they rightly deserve. I can serve my community by serving my students in this way. Their success will be evidence of my own.